

**SUMMARY OF THE
ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING
JULY 10, 2002**

The Accrediting Authority Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met on Wednesday, July 10, 2002, at 1:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) as part of the Eighth Annual NELAC Meeting in Tampa, Florida. Chairperson Louis Johnson of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality led the meeting. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the agenda items that follow.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Mr. Johnson introduced himself as the Chairperson of the Accrediting Authority Committee and welcomed the participants. The Committee members then introduced themselves.

BRIEFING BY AARB

Judy Duncan, Chair of the AARB, presented a recommendation to the Board of Directors that timelines for NELAP Accrediting Authority's certification require further discussion based on observations that the timelines are seldom accomplished. It was also recommend that the Accrediting Authority and EPA groups that served on the accreditation assessment teams be consulted as to whether the timelines for accreditation are realistic. The AARB made the observation that the program of accreditation would have more integrity if timelines had a more realistic deadline.

Discussion ensued and many suggestions were made. It was decided that the issue of accreditation timelines requires further discussion by the Committee. Input would be appreciated and any suggestions should be submitted to Mr. Johnson.

CHANGES TO 6.2.2 AND 6.3.3.1

Scott Hoatson presented the changes that have been proposed to section 6.2.2g. There are some grammatical changes that are being addressed. There is also the issue in section 6.2.2.g concerning a laboratory's accreditation from state to state. The proposed change for section 6.2.2.g reads:

NELAP accredited laboratories whose home state becomes a recognized NELAP accrediting authority may retain their primary accreditation through the state that holds their current accreditation. The laboratory may retain their existing certificate of accreditation through the date on the certificate, or until such prior time that they choose to renew. Depending on the regulations of their home state, the laboratory may still be required to apply for secondary accreditation from their home state until time for renewal for their primary accreditation through their home state accrediting authority as applicable based on requested Scope of Accreditation.

An issue was addressed concerning the use of the word “prior” in the phrase “until such prior time” in section 6.2.2.g and that the word be stricken because the intention is clear without it. An attendee also suggested using “it and it’s” instead of “they and they’re”. Jeanne Hankins, Director of NELAC, suggested leaving grammatical changes to the executive secretary, which is legal under the Constitution and Bylaws. A short discussion ensued and the decision was made to strike the word “prior” from section 6.2.2.g and to leave grammatical changes to the executive secretary.

A question was presented regarding whether or not a laboratory must go through the entire process of initial accreditation when applying for primary accreditation in their home state. Mr. Johnson stated that there will be a transition period in which the laboratory will be allowed to maintain accreditation in the original accredited state until such time that their accreditation comes up for renewal. When their accreditation comes up for renewal the laboratory will have to submit a new application to their home state because their home state will furthermore be the laboratory’s primary accrediting authority and will need the paperwork showing the entire process and responsibility for that laboratory.

Ms. Hankins commented that the intent is not clear in section 6.3.3.1.o regarding the inclusion of the word “laboratories”. Section 6.3.3.1.o reads:

The accrediting authority shall have a documented procedure to address the inclusion of those laboratories already NELAP accredited by another accrediting authority. The accrediting authority must be able to recognize the accreditation of laboratories that are located in the state who are entering their program or who are making significant changes to the scope of their accreditation, but are certified by another accrediting authority until such time that they complete the renewal process with their home state accrediting authority.

A committee member responded that the laboratories located in a NELAP state have to obtain NELAP accreditation from that state. The requirement to be accredited in a home state is the responsibility of that state’s accrediting authority and it is their decision as to how to accomplish that goal. A suggestion was proposed that section 6.3.3.1.o reference section 6.2.2.g and to incorporate that the accrediting authority should have a system in place to recognize section 6.2.2.g. Roxanne Robinson proposed language for section 6.3.3.1.o, which was accepted by the majority to read:

The accrediting authority shall have a documented procedure to address 6.2.2.g.

CHANGES TO 6.9.1 AND 6.11

A comment from an attendee addressed the editorial change in section 6.9.1.d that changes the word “evaluator” to “assessor” in this instance the word “evaluator” is correct because it refers to a specific training course. The training course title is “NELAP Accrediting Authority Evaluator Training Course.” It was decided in this instance to keep the word “evaluator” in section 6.9.1.d.

The changes proposed to section 6.9.1.e3 was a result of the comments received from the AARB that documentation is needed to verify the intent. The proposed changes to section 6.9.1.e3 was agreed upon and reads:

Have documentation that verifies freedom from any conflict of interest that would compromise acting in an impartial nondiscriminatory manner.

An issue arose concerning the proposed editorial change to section 6.11.f that changes the word “recommendation” to “decision” in relation to the accrediting authority’s appeals process concerning the AARB and the Director of NELAC. Ms. Duncan explained that the decision is not AARB’s responsibility and that they can only make a recommendation to the director of NELAC. The decision of the appeal is ultimately the Director’s decision and that the AARB is only an advisory Committee to NELAC.

Discussion ensued and there were many comments and questions regarding the accrediting authority’s appeals process addressed in section 6.11.f and g and how it does not follow a due process course. The Standards state that the Director of NELAP decides all appeals. Many attendees stated that it is not due process to present a second appeal to the same entity. Suggestions were made to have a panel or a different course of action when rendering a second appeal, to make the appeals process more just. A motion was presented and accepted by the Committee to not propose the changes to sections 6.11.f and 6.11.g at this time. A decision was made that this issue of the accrediting authority’s appeals process requires further discussion by the Committee.

EDITORIAL CHANGES TO CHAPTER 6

Mr. Johnson reported that there are various editorial changes to Chapter 6 and that these changes along with the changes proposed to sections 6.2.2, 6.3.3.1 and 6.9.1 would all be combined into one vote.

REPLACEMENT OF OUTGOING MEMBERS

Mr. Johnson reported that Ed Glick and William Cusick will be rotated off the Committee and that Patricia Hurr, USEPA, and June Flowers, Flowers Laboratory, will be the new members.

NEW BUSINESS

An attendee addressed the issue in section 6.4.3.g regarding the number of times a corrective action can be done after an accrediting authority’s recognition by NELAP has been denied or revoked. Comments were made concerning the fact that there are only two rounds of corrective action addressed in the Standards. Mr. Johnson drew attention to the fact that there is an appeals process addressing disagreements with accrediting authorities in section 6.10. A comment was presented that if changes are made concerning the appeals process for accrediting authorities in Chapter 6 that Chapter 4 should also address the appeals process concerning laboratories. Mr. Johnson proposed that the number of rounds of corrective action and the appeals process be discussed further by the Committee. A review of timetables found in Chapter 4 was to be undertaken in conjunction with Chapter 6.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.

**ACTION ITEMS
ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING
JULY 10, 2002**

Item No.	Date Proposed	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	7/10/02	The issue of accreditation timelines for accrediting authorities needs further discussion by the Committee. Suggestions should be forwarded to Mr. Johnson.	OPEN
2.	7/10/02	The issue of the appeals process in section 6.11.f requires further discussion by the Committee.	OPEN
3.	7/10/02	Mr. Johnson proposed that the number of rounds of corrective action and the appeals process for accrediting authorities be discussed further by the Committee and that Chapter 4 should be contacted concerning corrective action and appeals for laboratories.	OPEN

**PARTICIPANTS
ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING
JULY 10, 2002**

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